

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Charles "Butch" Farabee (BF)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Butch recounts growing up in Tucson, working for the Tucson Police Department and the National Park Service at Glen Canyon, Lake Mead, Death Valley, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Washinton, DC. and finally at Glacier National Park. He recounts the Yosemite Riots, starting the Parkmedic Program, rappelling off El Capitan, what he readily admits was marriage mismanagement, the 1986 helicopter and fixed wing crash at Grand Canyon and working on the first overflights management plan at Grand Canyon. This is Part 6 of a 21-part interview.

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TM: Today is Saturday, June 13, 2020. This is part six of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Charles "Butch" Farabee and my name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Butch, how are you today?

BF: Well good Tom, thanks.

TM: Great.

BF: Happy Coronavirus Day to you.

TM: Oh is it?

BF: Well, I don't know what it is.

TM: The Pandemic Day.

BF: Yeah.

TM: Happy Fires All Around Us Day. May we have your permission to record this oral history interview over the phone?

BF: You may.

TM: Thank you very much.

BF: What would you say if I said no?

TM: I would say, well, then I guess we won't record it, and I'll turn the machine off and take notes. Yeah, that's what I would do. So, we finished off part five when you were just transitioning from roughly a day short of a year in Death Valley.

BF: Right.

TM: And transitioned over to Yosemite, and a year before roughly a year before you arrived, a rather interesting event happened in Yosemite called the Yosemite riots. Can you take us back to what led up to the riots and then the riot itself, and then what happened afterwards?

BF: Well, okay. There's probably a lot of things that took place that led up to the riots. A riot is almost a little misnomer. Sometimes I refer to it as the Stoneman Meadow massacre which fortunately nobody was massacred, nobody died. But that period of time from the late (19)66 to (19)67 era, up till (19)73 or (19)74 was all during the counter-culture period during this country's history. And it was more than just hippies, but there were hippies as well, and hippies is sort of a generalized term which would include the counter-culture but you had Vietnam going on, and you had a lot of racial tensions going on, you had the women's movement. Things like Kent State took place not long before that, and Woodstock was in there. There was a whole different atmosphere around this country, the Black Panthers, the Underground, the Weathermen, the Chicago Seven I guess it is. So, there was a lot of turmoil, social turmoil around the country, and Yosemite, well let me backtrack for just a moment. They were involved in, not that everybody was using drugs, but there was a fair amount of LSD, I guess that chemically LSD was a part of that. A lot of marijuana. So, Yosemite was sort of a crossroads for, on a micro scale anyway, a crossroads for this whole social movement. But you also had in the park a lot of family groups for lack of a better term, sort of the straights versus the others so there was always that sort of clash and sometimes that was a big deal and sometimes it wasn't. But in Berkeley, there was Berkeley, and Stanford, and the San Francisco area in general there was a lot of underground social turmoil and there were several underground newspapers. One that I can recall very distinctly was called the Berkeley Barb. And I don't know that it's still being done, probably not. But it would talk about the Rangers in Yosemite as an example and name them and put photos of them in the Berkeley Barb and on one occasion, several weeks before, there was an announcement put into some of these underground newspapers and that was just word of mouth because the social media that we have today didn't exist then. And it said come to Yosemite we're going to take the valley over or maybe the park over I'm not sure. In addition to the normal group of hippies that were hiding in the caves and camping and living in the valleys a lot of others showed up as well. The Park Service, the Rangers, and the Park Management really had no ability to handle this stuff. There was no real perspective. The park managers at the time were sort of old school older white guys probably in their 50s and 60s at this point. And this whole culture, the drugs, and the long hair, and the, well just the, what am I trying to say, the...

TM: The establishment?

BF: Yeah, but I was thinking about—you know, sort of the sexual revolution is what I was thinking about but I couldn't get that out.

TM: Okay.

BF: But yeah they represented the establishment.

TM: Hey Butch?

BF: Yes.

TM: Do you want to go back a minute, I've been thinking about something you said about the Berkeley Barb...

BF: Yeah.

TM: And that it had photos of Rangers in it. What was it saying about the Park Service in Yosemite?

BF: Well I think that the Rangers in those days and several of them are still very good friends of mine had no real training in law enforcement, or crowd control, or crowd management.

TM: Right.

BF: And weren't really tuned-in or very empathetic and nice people or gave good interpretive programs and that sort of thing. They weren't necessarily because of the training or lack thereof, they were sort of hard core. I think they were in many cases they were forced into it, the overwhelming numbers of campsites and a lot of deaths from neighboring campsites and it was really a zoo. These guys not only did they have to put up and deal with the law enforcement stuff but they also put up with the climbing which was just beginning which hadn't been in the park too long. Trying to figure out how to get somebody off a big wall now when the Rangers with one or two exceptions really had neither interest or ability to learn how to climb. Climbing is a specialty you have to have some willingness to do some of these big walls like El Capitan and Half Dome. So, of course they were doing the EMS and the fire, and the Rangers were doing everything which is what I truly enjoyed. That's what I did for 10 years there in Yosemite. But the Rangers were a little hard ass sometimes I suspect or at least they were interpreted as that so in the Berkeley Barb, at least one or several of these men, because we didn't have any women at that time, were featured or at least their faces were put on there and photos of them and beyond that I really don't have any firsthand knowledge of these articles. I know that they took place. But frankly, I've never seen one.

TM: Okay.

BF: So whether or not I'm actually telling a lie here or not I don't know. But I've been told that that was what was taking place.

TM: Well it's funny because I was just thinking about the National Parks as a place of refuge. And so it would make sense that people in San Francisco and Berkeley would look to the park basically as an extension of their backyard a ways out of town but sort of off to the east there in the Sierras. So it's not a place I guess you would think, or at least I would think as a naïve kind of guy that there would be this clash of Old School New School values, but that was happening everywhere, it was happening in town, it was happening out of town, it was happening all across the country. So there's no reason to suspect it shouldn't have been happening with the National Park Service.

BF: Yeah. Well, at these big parks, particularly like Yosemite and Death Valley and other parks. Oftentimes during that era people sort of thought it was a free for all, you know once they got into the park they were in a Disneyland kind of environment where anything goes. A lot of nudism. People sort of left their brains at the gate when they came in. But you also had family groups and the straights as you will as I said before camping there and there were always these clashes. But it wasn't like it was an everyday fist fight but there was friction between the groups often.

TM: Groups of people, like with loud music, or partying, or nudity that kind of stuff that the straights if you will, I think of Ozzie and Harriet, would have trouble with and wouldn't necessarily want to camp next to? Is that kind of right there?

BF: Well, yes and they often had to camp next to each other. Again, it wasn't like there was friction every day, but the friction wasn't between every campsite or anything, it wasn't that egregious.

TM: Okay.

BF: If you go down to the market, you go to Degnan's which was a little delicatessen there and there'd be these 16 to 25-year-olds just hanging out. Some were panhandling begging for food, well not too much food, but money as people would walk by which we had to try to curtail and we would have undercover Rangers trying to watch for it. It wasn't like we were ignoring it it's just that there was so much of this that it was one emergency after another, or one incident after another. In front of the village store or at Degnan's which was the delicatessen and all through the mall and in those days you could drive into the mall it was a big parking lot. Now it's sealed off and it's a walking mall. They've done a lot of work to it since putting in trees and that sort of thing. But in 1970 you could you could drive in there and loud music, and then the camp grounds, the campsite, there would be partying at night. The family groups were trying to get the kids to sleep. The kids were exposed to naked girls. And probably, or at least half-dressed men, or boys. So, it was really quite exciting, from my perspective, quite interesting. I think way back a couple of sessions back I mentioned that a lot of my peers really felt that their forte was to take care of the resource. And I certainly don't want to denigrate that but I sort of thought my forte might be working with the public in these kinds of situations. Because a lot of my peers were taking care of the resource. So that's sort of my perspective on it. So, I've already lost your question Tom.

TM: Well, no worries. We were talking about the clash of cultures, the hippies if you will, the new wave, the new progressives and the straights the people later on in years and you know the sort of typical American culture. And one of the things that occurred to me was that the Park Service had no management plan per se this was before management plans, is that right?

BF: Well, I guess I can't speak to exactly that. Yosemite and I guess the Park Service in general was just unprepared to some degree we had our heads in the sand.

TM: It sounds like unprepared not just for the clash of cultures, but for the growth of visitation.

BF: Right.

TM: So, here's the straights camped next to the hippies in a number of campsites, and people are panhandling. What led up to the events then of June 21? I'm sorry, it wasn't June 21, 1970. What was the day?

BF: Well, July 4th. It was the 4th of July weekend, that was the riot. Now there are a lot of things that led up to that point.

TM: Like what?

BF: Well one was the Memorial Day weekend. It was sort of a trial run. There were a lot of people in the park. And you enter these big parks, of course, on the major weekends like Memorial Day and Labor Day are very busy anyway to the point where the park is breaking at the seams and the Rangers, and the staff in general are working sort of 24/7 sometimes and at the end of an eight hour shift you just don't go home. I mean there's still so much going on. And in my case I would come back and work 16 - 18 hours a day. Which of course led up to my divorce essentially. But there was just so much going on but the weekend before Memorial weekend not weekend the week before Memorial Day weekend lots of people and everybody seemed to get along pretty good. There were instances of people being arrested. The jail that we had in the park at that time on that weekend was capable of holding about eight people. So, the Rangers were stressed at that point. Well a lot of these people came back for the Fourth of July, but what they didn't know about or didn't expect anyway was that the Berkeley Barb and some of these other underground newspapers and just the word of mouth to come up to Yosemite we're going to take the park over. And that's what they tried to do. And I don't think anybody really thought that they were going to wrestle it away from the federal government. A lot of these younger people just thought this is a big party. And we're gonna raise some cane. And we'll see what happens. So, the park was instituting a closure of this one particular meadow called Stoneman Meadow which is a pretty good-sized meadow. It's between the Ahwahnee Hotel, and Curry Village Grocery store or complex there. Actually, I'm wrong on that Tom, I was thinking about the Ahwahnee Meadow, the Stoneman Meadow is over closer to the campgrounds and but again, a very good-sized meadow I think even bigger. So, they put signs up saying the meadow is going to be closed at seven o'clock because there was so much impact to the vegetation and just the resource in general. That was the collar under which the park was trying to enforce this closure. So, the signs were put up. Well, you can almost envision what's going to happen. The park had about 15 patrol Rangers, the Park Superintendent, or maybe the Acting Superintendent at that time called the company Wrangler, the guy in charge of the Wranglers, a guy by the name of Dean, I forgot Dean's last name. But to bring his Wranglers and horses over and the park had a couple of mounted patrolmen as well. So, they were sort of hidden out in the trees. I think that's Dean Thompson. He got on a bullhorn and said "The meadow is closed. Because it was like seven o'clock at night and there's probably I think a good guestimate would be maybe 600 young people in this meadow waiting for this event to take place and a lot of drinking and some of them have stockpiled rocks behind trees and they put bottles behind trees in order to throw and break. There are photos actually of horses having the bottles being broken over the noses of horses. So, the meadow is closed at seven o'clock and it becomes a big riot and the Rangers go out. The Wranglers go out. I'm sure that people were stepped on by some of the horses. Well at the end of the hour or so it was sort of hippies one, Rangers zero. They were thrown out of the meadow and the meadow was basically taken over by this group of counterculture people that were trying to make a statement of some kind. So, what happened at that point is the dispatcher for the park I think it was Ann Means put out a call to other agencies and exactly the mechanism for doing that I'm not clear about, but she was able to send out a message that was picked up by several local sheriff's departments, Mariposa County, Merced County, Madeira County, as well as the California highway patrol. The Border Patrol. The FBI. The U.S. Marshals. Ultimately what happens within the next three hours you've got someplace close to 150 to 175 outside law enforcement officers come rushing into the park to assist the Rangers because the way she put out this message was that the valley has been overridden

and taken over. So, you've got all of these police men and sheriff's deputies and some highway patrolmen and some FBI agents from Merced. All these people are rushing up into the park, none of which except, for the FBI, none of which had any legal jurisdiction in the park. I mean technically they couldn't do any law enforcement which probably wouldn't have stopped them anyway, but the U.S. Marshal I think the Assistant to the State U.S. Marshal, and I'm not sure if that's the technical term, but the U.S. Marshal's office anyway, came up and deputized all of these non-federal officers like sheriff's deputies and policemen from Merced and policemen from Fresno deputized them and made them agents of the federal government. Now technically they could make these arrests and ultimately what happens while... let me backtrack for a moment. So, a couple of cars are burned. One sheriff's car is rolled over and torched. There are shots fired but I think they were warning shots. I don't necessarily think it was anybody shooting at anybody else. It was just a real melee I guess is a good word which I don't very often use I suppose, but it was a real riot for the Rangers and then you got all these outside policeman, law enforcement people coming in so now they end up during the night the next 5 or 6 hours you end up having something like I've seen the figures 169 rings in my mind but I'm not 100% sure about that but you know let's say at least 160 people were arrested, they had mass arrests. Busses were brought up from Fresno for just this kind of thing and that was sort of the climate that was taking place around the entire country. There were all these kinds of skirmishes and incidents where there would be a lot of people and demonstrations where people were being arrested but in mass. And an officer would take somebody, have his photograph taken with whoever's being arrested, turn him over the person being arrested would be turned over to somebody who has them restrained or handcuffed and probably in one of these buses, and they end up going down to Fresno where they are booked. Now, ultimately, most of these people are released. I don't know I'd have to go back and look at some of the documents, I guess, but to see if anybody was really held for any length of time but I think I would have been it was really a way to sort of control the situation. And yes, they were probably arrested, but they were also released. I think a good lawyer and probably the U.S. Attorney's Office or whatever, probably could get in and dissect this and see what was legal and what wasn't legal. But just for the grace of goodness I guess nobody was hurt seriously hurt. Dr. Wurgler, who both Tom and I know and I still have on a pedestal who just recently died within the last six months or so was a doctor. He was trained as a surgeon by training but had spent time in Vietnam, and had been working in a mash unit in Vietnam at that time and he was used to this kind of thing. And he told me on several different occasions he said it was his opinion that one wrong move and this could have been a Kent State, it could have been some Ranger that got scared or some highway patrol maybe not highway patrol but obviously some sheriff's deputies that might not have had very much training would get spooked and bam. Before you know it, you've got people killed or seriously hurt and although people were injured nobody was seriously hurt. I don't think anybody was really taken to the hospital for any long time anyway. They might have been treated. So that took place all night, and the next morning, there is a, there's actually a movie or not a movie, a video of a bunch of this, and I use it to teach with, that was taken by a young man at the time David Vassar who went on to be quite a pretty significant cinematographer making lots of movies certainly for him and for the Park Service included. So the next weekend, or within a couple of days, the U.S. Park Police and D.C. brought in a contingent of Park Policeman and they were way out of their element. I mean the park needed some manpower, but they didn't know anything about being around bears, or providing advanced first aid, responding to emergencies other than law enforcement, but it was still good to have this back up there. That was the time exactly when the first or at least the second group of Rangers were at a police school going through formal police training in Washington, D.C. They were brought back to augment well to be in place in the park because you know a lack of manpower. So, all of a sudden this is a serious social milestone in National Park Service history, not only from law enforcement, but all of a sudden, the establishment, the old guard ranger old guard managers,

sort of were woken up, or were finally awakened by the fact that the country is moving on, and there's a different clientele coming into the park that they couldn't manage these places like they used to in the 40s or 50s. Life had moved on and lots of things were taking place socially around the country, that the Park Service just needed to catch up to and at that point was way behind what was taking place in the rest of the country. So, I'm going to shut up for a second Tom and see if you've got any questions because I've been shooting my mouth off a lot.

TM: Well I only have one right away which was do you know the name of the Superintendent?

BF: Larry Hadley was the Superintendent he was not in the park at the time.

TM: What do you know about Larry?

BF: Well not really too much.

TM: Okay.

BF: I mean I have ways to double check that but I don't know much off the top of my head.

TM: Okay, no worries. You mention that Dick Marks was the staff park ranger. What was Dick's role in all of this do you know?

BF: Yeah, hold on just a second, I'm going to grab a book.

TM: Okay.

BF: It'll only take me about 30 seconds.

TM: Yeah, no worries, thank you.

BF: The book is The Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials. And in it I'm going to go to Yosemite, if I can remember where exactly y is in the alphabet here. (Laughs)

TM: In the back somewhere. (Laughs)

BF: Yeah. u, v, w, x, y, z. So, Yosemite and what I'm looking up is, let's see, what it says here so Hadley was the Superintendent at Yosemite from January 28, 1968 to August 22, 1970 and that date, not that date per se, but that is a pretty important mention because Mr. Hadley well anyway a number of years and not only Hadley but a couple of others this was such a black eye for the Park Service and George Hertzog who was then the Director he removed him. Hadley was taken out of that position. You had mentioned Dick Marks and we had talked about him before. Dick was the staff Park Ranger which I've never seen his position description but he had his finger in protection kinds of things: fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, but he didn't necessarily supervise too much. The people that were in charge of fire and other things were part of this unit manager system, that was sort of dispersed, you had Rangers and interpreters in the valley working for one person, then Rangers and interpreters at Wawona were working for somebody else.

TM: Where? I'm sorry what was the second place?

BF: Wawona. It is the second most popular part of Yosemite National Park.

TM: Wawona. Okay thank you.

BF: I think there were maybe three unit managers at that time and Bryan Harry was the valley Ranger but Dick Marks was the staff park ranger and at the time he was probably the ranking if you will in terms of the GS Level the ranking person in the park or at least at that spot in the meadow at that particular time. I have to be careful here about speaking ill of the dead but the men that were there, the rangers that were there, tend to say that Dick was very unorganized and did not respond to this incident appropriately. I think in defense of Dick of course maybe nobody could have I mean it would have been nice had we been able to foresee this, and probably some of the Rangers did see it coming, but Dick is usually castigated if that's the right term for having created much of this turmoil.

TM: How so?

BF: Well I mean just his management style. He well, he talked about the Grand Canyon and again I want to be a little careful about being too negative...

TM: Yeah. Butch one of the things I think of you mentioned when you showed up at Yosemite, and suddenly you were overseeing, I don't know a couple dozen people. You had no training for that?

BF: No.

TM: Now, so I think of Dick Marks. I'm assuming he had no training either but that's an assumption.

BF: Well, I have to think a little bit about what Dick's history was before that. I should know this too Tom because I worked directly for him, he was my immediate supervisor at the Grand Canyon and then when I was Superintendent at Padre Island, he was my immediate boss. I should know more than I'm saying and it's not that I have a real bad memory I somehow I'm not so sure I ever really knew what his history was before that, but I would say that he, he didn't have much more training than anybody else did in terms of crowd management. And these kinds of emergencies.

TM: Okay.

BF: It's one thing to try to rescue somebody that's caught the middle of a river or fight a wildland fire. It's another thing when you're trying to deal with the four or five or six hundred people who don't want to be corralled. I guess that's not a good term but people that don't want to be managed. You know that's a whole different set of skills and training and things that lead up to somebody being able to do that.

TM: Right and my assumption again thinking about you and your career those three years in the Tucson police department you would have at least been familiar with large crowd control through the parade and the big events that were happening in Tucson. I'm assuming that Dick Marks had none of that background that's assumption on my part, I don't know.

BF: Yeah, I'm not so sure. I mean I have to assume that Dick had some experience I mean he was probably eight to ten years older than myself.

TM: So mid-thirties.

BF: Yeah mid-thirties maybe late thirties. My experience with crowd control, in the middle of maybe 67 or 68 era when policemen were being trained in crowd control and riot control and I was put through the paces with the baton and my helmet on the police department and we had some of that but the Rangers and the Park Staff and park staffs in general throughout the NPS hadn't gotten to this point at least not that I recall. I mean again I was stuck in the middle of nowhere in Death Valley prior to this stuff so you know I'm not necessarily an expert on all of this. But Dick was a nice person, good family man, but I think was just outgunned sort of quote unquote on that particular incident. So, as I say, the men that were there, that were responding that were out in the meadow and fighting the counterculture types with all the mace and the smoke and all kinds of stuff that was taking place up around them. They tend to say that Dick created this problem. I suspect they can articulate that better than I can. Just because they were there and nothing else. In this case it's sort of hearsay on my part but it's a lot hearsay in that it's all saying the same thing.

TM: You mention Larry Hadley, the Superintendent at the time, within a month or month in a half was transferred. Did Dick get transferred out as well? Did others get transferred out?

BF: No, surprisingly Dick did not, I don't know why or how but Dick was not transferred. He ended up, not too long after that becoming the Superintendent at Fire Island. But not because of anything he did on that particular weekend. It was just sort of his time to go.

TM: Okay.

BF: Surprisingly though others did, and Hadley was the one and of course you know the buck sort of stops at the top, as they say, and Mr. Hadley was the Superintendent at the time. Whether he should have been more prepared or could have been more prepared by seeing what happened in the administration before him, I don't know. We can always Monday morning quarterback and say yes, but the truth is, a lot of these things just happen and you know we should have been prepared but we weren't, and maybe it's nobody's real fault, maybe just the agency's fault.

TM: Well, it's difficult to go into a crowd of people on horseback, with a bunch of Wranglers and expect to achieve success.

BF: Yeah, and the truth is until 2004 I think this other woman and I, Kim Tucker, and I, pretty much single handedly had a reunion in Yosemite Valley of people who worked or played or climbed, or were even arrested. We didn't really care. During the 70s. That was a reunion. At the height of the reunion we had probably close to 400 people that came. A lot of friends, a lot of people I hadn't seen for years and years and years. But part of the agenda I orchestrated a panel discussion, a 90-minute panel discussion. I got Bob Barbee who, I think was actually, he might have even been at that time the Regional Director for Alaska, but he had been Superintendent at Yellowstone at one time and was a very senior manager in the entire National Park system but he had been right there in the middle of that riot. He was a Resource Manager at the time. And he told me, I'll come back to this panel in just a second, but he told me that he and another person were hiding behind a pine tree when all hell was breaking loose and they were hiding behind this big pine tree with basically a hippie who turns out to be a former retired ex policeman who doesn't want to be, I mean he knows what is coming but he doesn't want to be out in the middle of it, but he was sort of there to help support everybody as well. He ends up giving a bunch of love beads to give to Bob. Bob took off his Park Service shirt so he had a t-

shirt on and he's got these love beads on. So that he could get into the people that were around him. I mean that's how scary that was and then coming back to this panel, and I'll get back to the Wranglers in just a second. So we had this panel 90 minutes Bob was the emcee and onstage were about five people who have been right in the middle of this riot. Pete Thompson, Dave Patterson, Ron Mackie, and this Dean, the Wrangler, that I feel embarrassed I can't remember his last name at the moment. But he was the Chief Wrangler and ran the stock operation for the company for the Curry company. As luck would have it just by total coincidence Dave Vassar who had made this video which people find on YouTube and he's really quite famous in certain circles anyway I've got all of them on the stage at one time. There were probably 250 or 300 people in the auditorium with standing room only. Probably the fire marshal would have been really upset. Bob was able to have these men talk about what was taking place and what their part of the incident was etc. He gets to Dean, the Wrangler, and this is all brand new information to me, this is 2004 I believe, and Dean was saying that the either the Acting Superintendent, and I don't know who that is, I could probably find out but the moment I can't tell you, but he called the concessions horse operations and basically said, bring all your Wranglers and as many horses as you can. So these guys show up and they're given axe handles, they've got fire helmets on, their riding company horses they're not deputized or they have absolutely zero authority. They have as much training as the rest of the Rangers which is basically none. And they are part of what's going out into the meadow. This video that Dave Vassar was taking shows these guys out there with lariats and trying to, I don't know, trying to wrangle people. I mean I guess I don't have a good way to phrase that. It was a zoo. A riot would be close to being correct, but the Ranger part of this operation was so overwhelmed by manpower and the other side that, as I said, it was hippies one, Rangers zero. These rocks that I had said that were stockpiled were being thrown, wine bottles were being broken over the noses of horses. And this went on for probably, I'm going probably try not to exaggerate but probably half an hour to an hour. These things were taking place. And mace was being sprayed, and the video will show you a lot of smoke in the air around. I don't think necessarily smoke from campfires and somehow they were firecrackers and other ways to produce smoke. It was pretty surreal. The video will show a lot of this. So, some of this has been validated by this video. So, what, so did I get off of point here too bad?

TM: No, not at all. I was just thinking you mentioned hippies one, Rangers zero, but that was only at the end of the first quarter. And the game ended at halftime when superior firepower came in. But again it's funny because no other, if I have this right, no other service unit in the agency had anything like this happen.

BF: No, certainly not like this. But there had been some warning signs taking place over the previous year or two. I mentioned one or two sessions back about that Ranger telling that young boy in Lake Mead, Lan Monroe was the name of the Ranger. He wasn't trained he wasn't prepared for what he was being asked to do really although that's the way we conducted business for years and years and years even during my time. We had a lot of people working seasonally who had very little training. What training they got was mostly a day or two worth when they got up to the park. So, there were these warning signs going on around the system I'm sure. But Yosemite was probably a good word for the epitome at that point anyway of this sort of unrest, social unrest, the counterculture versus the straights, the Park Service Management, old school sort of being brought into the next century in terms of what's taking place around the country. You know the Park Service has in those days, certainly and maybe even today but in those days, there was a lot of insular nature. You see it in National Park and Yosemite Valley. Well I guess a good example of me being in Death Valley I really had no idea what was going on around me. And in my case, my defense is that I didn't have TV or radio. So

I really wasn't sure what was taking place, although when I was in the police department I started seeing some of that.

TM: But there were no riots in Death Valley or at Lake Mead or at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, or Grand Canyon National Park, or at Statute of Liberty, or at Shenandoah.

BF: Well, not necessarily riots, but there were incidents taking place around the country in National Park areas. Not the magnitude that we're talking about right now. But they were there.

TM: So what was the outcome of this, the After incident review if you will of what happened?

BF: Well, let me tell you about one incident that took place that I just thought was hilarious.

TM: Okay.

BF: But pretty significant, actually. And this is something I learned afterwards but I was still in Yosemite at the time, probably about 1978 – 79. The Chief Law Enforcement Officer Lee Shackleton and I went down, for whatever reason, to see the Sheriff in Mariposa which is a county. Yosemite has three counties and Mariposa is the principal one. But Mariposa of course is its own county in the little town of Mariposa. So, we went down to visit the Sheriff for some reason. And he was telling the story, sort of, good old boy kinds of stories that when he responded to that incident he had a guy in jail who had stolen a cow. So, he was a felon, a cattle thief. But as these small towns are probably prone to do everybody sort of knows everybody and it's one of those things where he was let out to go to work during the day and probably had to come back and shut the door when he went into his cell at night.

TM: Yeah, of his own cell.

BF: Sort of the Andy Griffith and Barney Fife type. So, he gets this alert and he takes this prisoner. The two of them race up to Yosemite Valley. So, he must have known this guy and I don't know what his name is. So they get into the valley and pretty soon the marshal's office, the US Marshals office, is deputizing all of these outside entities. So, essentially, you've got a line of Highway Patrol, sheriff's deputies, and policeman standing in a line. You've got the U.S. Marshals standing out in front saying raise your right hand. They're sworn in as federal agents. And in this line, is this felon, this good old boy friend of the sheriff. So now you've got this guy who was in jail for having stolen a cow which would be a felony being deputized as a federal law enforcement agent and he has a shotgun and then if I'm not mistaken I believe it's the Sheriff's car is one of the cars that's either turned over or is burned. Now as I say nobody was shot. Fortunately. I just thought it was not only funny, but pretty interesting about how chaotic things were at that particular moment when you've got this felon being sworn in as a federal law enforcement officer.

TM: Right.

BF: So that was my story about that. So what was your question?

TM: It's fascinating it seems that when the dispatcher put out the call, the surrounding resources came with the kitchen sink, I mean with the felon out of the jail, and anybody else they could grab.

BF: Right.

TM: They didn't give them axe handles and lariats, they gave them shotguns.

BF: Well, I think the sheriff's deputy or the sheriff at that point, was just the sheriff, he wasn't the deputy he was the number one guy for the county. But the park did not have a stash of any kind of weapons. Rangers before this were making car stops and I think we talked about the day patrols. You really didn't wear a gun. You did not have a gun visible at least. At night it was a little different story you could have a weapon on and you could have a pair of handcuffs. But that was about it. I mean you really didn't have much. So, when these guys like the Wranglers and probably some maintenance men were pushed into responding to what was taking place in the meadow itself. Some of them had axe handles they probably had other things I just don't know about. But the after action aspect of this is somewhere around 160 people were arrested. I kind of think that technically there were arrests but I also believe that they probably were released by a magistrate in Fresno. So, nobody did any kind of time or fines or anything, but from a management standpoint, the superintendent and several of his close administrators were removed from the park. The Director George Hertzog, was an attorney by education and had been in the park, as a superintendent, really never was a field person, but very talented and had a lot of political connections in Congress he ends up removing Hadley and several others. They bring in a guy named Wayne Cone who only lasts about 13 months. He is removed pretty quickly as well. He's actually made the Assistant Superintendent in Rocky Mountain when he leaves Yosemite so it was essentially a demotion for him certainly by stature, it was. Then at the national level, the agency, it was sort of a wakeup call in many ways, not only in terms of law enforcement training, but also the fact that socially these parks really could not be done in isolation. The Park Service started realizing that they needed to rely on their neighbors and work with their neighbors much more closely from a management standpoint. Up until this time, many of these national park areas were pretty insular, if that's the right term. I mean, they were their own you know they just took care of their own problems internally, really didn't do much to the outside. I think that was a significant... I don't know about revelation, but certainly a significant aspect of the outcome of all this. And then, also, they started putting Rangers through serious professional law enforcement training, and you've got a whole, you've got several hundred Rangers around the country that are going to need to go to this school and of course they can only handle like 20 at a time. So, there's quite a backlog, and ultimately Rangers from Yosemite and I think Sequoia were actually going to training in Clark county in Las Vegas to their academy. So, there are several spin offs on the fallout from this incident. But I think socially and managerially was the most significant.

TM: Okay.

BF: So, I mean I don't know what else, I mean I could probably keep on going about that on this little tirade about what took place but I'm not so sure I need to, do you have some questions?

TM: Well no it would make sense basically, this is helpful for me to understand it. It would appear as though by 1970 what the National Park Service realized was that their staff was not trained in resource protection.

BF: And crowd control and...

TM: Well yeah, I mean that was now becoming a part of resource protection.

BF: Yeah.

TM: Which other people I've interviewed have talked about if they wore their weapon as a law enforcement officer they would be called into the superintendent's office and be told to hide their weapon because what would the visitors think? And the Rangers reply was well I've got \$10,000 cash in the car going from the front entrance station to the bank, and I have no weapon, no weapon showing, that doesn't sound like it makes sense. So again, this is increased visitation, increased stressors placed on the agency. It just makes sense that it, to kind of play devil's advocate here a little bit of both sides, it would make sense that the park would then put more effort into law enforcement training.

BF: Yes. I mean that was one of the major outcomes and money was appropriated or re-released or, you know, realigned to try to increase this training.

TM: Okay.

BF: Would you mind if I read a paragraph that I wrote for my book on Rangers about this incident?

TM: Not at all. Please.

BF: And this is only one paragraph out of several pages worth. But it kind of helps, I hope at least set the tone. Much better than I can ad lib about what was taking place. So, the paragraph begins "Roving bands of half-naked hippies swagger from one family tent to the next, panhandling money and food. Rock music blared and despite extreme fire danger, fireworks exploded in the dark. Gatherings of juveniles shouted obscenities to the next tribal enclave, the second group trying to outdo the first in vulgarity and loudness. Vehicles raced throughout the valley and loud mufflers thundered off the granite walls. A routine Ranger campground patrol often resulted in rocks being thrown and anyone in uniform was fair game for verbal assaults. To those officials out taking the parks pulse that night, the valley's most primitive jungle like atmosphere was surrealistic and nerve racking. More wine and drugs, and the momentum for a nightmare kept building." So that's sort of the night before this incident took place. That's how I phrased it. And that isn't much of an exaggeration I think. The reason I say that is because this kind of atmosphere, that I just read, existed for the next several summers that I was there.

TM: Okay.

BF: That first summer when I was the night shift supervisor in the summertime this was an every night occurrence, just what I read. The Rangers and I, five or six permanents and 15 or so seasonals at least were responding to these incidents. It wasn't like they had to fight their way in and fight their way out and I don't mean to make it sound that dramatic. But there were many, many nights when it was scary. It was like a sort of a jungle. You could hear the beat of the Tom-toms in the background and, as I said, you know, ricocheting off the walls, the granite walls. It was a very interesting time.

TM: What did you do to get on top of it?

BF: Well, I don't think I ever got on top of it Tom.

TM: Okay.

BF: It just was a response of one thing after another. You would just live through it and the night shift was a little staggering so that you have a little bit of an overlap. That would be from 4:30 to

12:30 or 5:00 to 1:00 something like that. I almost never, I bet you, four days out of five and I often work seven days a week, I bet you four nights out of those I did not get home until the sun was coming up the next morning.

TM: Okay.

BF: So, I never got on top of it, but what I did and the guys that were working with me and for me did, we just sort of out lived it. We would go until nothing needed to be going to anymore. If that makes sense. We did not really manage stuff, but we had a presence. I tried I think in a small way try to bring some temperament, if you will, to people that were working with me. I'm certainly not going to pat myself on the back. I'm sure I made any number of mistakes. But when the sun would rise you'd come back to more of a normal day and there'd be a lot of people it'd be wall to wall people in the park, but they wouldn't be malevolent I mean, they wouldn't be out trying to beat each other up at this point. But once it started getting dark the heat of the day had been there and a lot of these younger people had been drinking or been taking drugs and then that night would come around. Very often it would just be not chaos is probably too strong a word, and it would be wall to wall incidents. We'd go from one first aid, to one campground dispute, to a rescue, to just loud music in the campsite two sites away, all that sort of thing and it just went on and on and on. From my perspective, being essentially an adrenaline freak, it was pretty exciting. It was also scary. And it was demanding. It took a real toll on my family because I didn't have any kids at this point. Ultimately it would take a toll on my family more so on my wife who was working and she understood how all of this was taking place and so she gave me a lot of slack on the fact that I wouldn't come home until the sun would be coming up.

TM: Right, you'd be coming in and she'd be going to work.

BF: Well it would depend, sometimes she was working nights too. When she first started, I think pretty quickly she became a campground fee collector.

TM: Okay.

BF: So, she could easily have been working at nights as well. The way the campgrounds were set up in those days, you couldn't go into, you could go into the campgrounds, but you couldn't take a site. The sites were occupied until like three or four in the afternoon or maybe two ish in the afternoon. From that point on then you'll be registering new occupants. Unless somebody had maybe been at the campsite for three or four days or something. So, she was working quite a bit at night as well and she had access to a park radio and she could hear what was taking place back. But we didn't get paid over time. It was our, I say our collectively, I mean my peers, men and women who were very good friends of mine to this day our attitude was we will work until we don't need to work anymore. If that makes sense. We didn't get paid for, but we did not want our brother and sister Rangers to be hung out I mean we felt like we needed to be out there helping them out.

TM: Wait, sounds like a great recipe for burnout?

BF: Well, sure, oh yeah. It's going to be really easy for me to slip into the thing where the Rangers and the staff today, well I'm going to shut up on that one. But yes, burnout would have been pretty potentially possible and we had a lot of deaths. In 73 we had 38 deaths in one year.

TM: Now this is visitor deaths or employee deaths?

BF: No, no I'm sorry these are visitor deaths.

TM: Okay.

BF: They weren't all traumatic, some had a heart attack or died of cancer it was their time to go. But mostly, traumatic: car wrecks, cliffs, drownings, waterfalls.

TM: That's hard on the staff that has to deal with distraught family members and body recovery etcetera.

BF: And I did all of that as well. I've made a number of death notifications and calling a family up on the phone. It's much more sophisticated today, but in those days that's what we had to do. We did not know enough I say we collectively either agency or even law enforcement professionally. We really didn't know much about calling the local police department and having them do something in person, which is sort of SOP these days. So, I did a lot of that I did a lot of body recovers, I did a lot of EMS, at one time I was probably the most advanced first aider in the park and worked with the hospital: Dr. Wurgler, Dr. Hendricks and Dr. Levarde. The nurses. About a dozen, or eight to a dozen nurses.

TM: Hey Butch.

BF: Yes, sir.

TM: This might be a good place to think about wrapping up Part Six because I would like to learn more about the clinic, the hospital there, its relationship with the Park and hear your stories about Jim Wurgler, and so does that make sense?

BF: Yes, that's fine with me.

TM: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this?

BF: The riot?

TM: Yeah, I think the riot we've pretty much covered and now we're sort of heading off into your role in Yosemite and what took place there for the 10 years you were there. Just the stressors on the park staff that it sounds like those stressors didn't go away after the riot. They were still there. The potential for burnout.

BF: Yeah, I'm sure that's true.

TM: Okay, well, with that we'll conclude this Part Six Oral History interview with Butch Farabee. Today is June 13, 2020. My name is Tom Martin. Butch, thank you so very much.

BF: My pleasure. Thank you.